DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 143 208 FL 008 755

AUTHOR Harper, Sandra N.
TITLE Activities for Motivation and Real Communication.
PUB DATE 22 Apr 77
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the GLCA Foreign Languages Workshop (Wooster College, April 22, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Games; Communication Skills; *Communicative Competence (Languages); Conversational Language Courses; Higher Education; *Language Instruction; *Learning Activities; Questioning Techniques; Role Playing; Secondary Education; *Second Language Learning; Speech Communication; *Teaching Methods; Verbal Communication

ABSTRACT

One of the trends in foreign language teaching today seems to be increased emphasis on the development of communicative competence and a new concern for the student as an individual. One technique for stimulating communication is the "rapid-fire question" technique, which involves building up to a speed of 150-200 questions in 50 minutes. This technique fosters competition, thus stimulating students and eliminating periods of silence. Another technique of this kind is independent outside reading followed by group discussion in class. Other techniques involve the use of conversation cards, reproducing television shows in the target language, writing and dramatizing shows, role playing, use of visual aids, the circular narrative (where each student adds one sentence to a story begun by a teacher), problem solving, vocabulary bees, and grammatical "relay races." (AM)

**********
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
**********

ED143208

# Activities for Motivation and Real Communication

Sandra N. Harper
Ohio Wesleyan University

One of the trends in foreign language teaching today seems to be increased emphasis on the development of communicative competence and a new concern for the student as an individual.[1] These goals are partially achieved by providing more opportunities in the classroom for real communication.

There are several definitions of real communication. The one that I find most meaningful is included in Theodore B. Kalivoda's article, "Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom." Kalivoda defines real communication as a " ...type of talk which deals with a very functional use of the language which results in students' ability to express needs, desires, attitudes, feelings and the like."[2]

I have chosen to describe some activities used to develop motivation and real communication, not merely because they are in vogue, but rather because my personal experience has shown that such activities constitute a successful approach to foreign language teaching. Providing opportunities for real communication is important because this kind of talk is satisfying to students, motivates them, and gives them a sense of immediate purpose. One of the first questions that students ask me when they begin language study is, will I be able to converse? Students want an

FL008755

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sandra N. Harper
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

experience of using the language successfully for some outside purpose rahter than merely practicing its forms. Unfortunately the latter is still prevalent in some foreign language classrooms as Gilbert Jarvis observes in his article, "Molecule by Molecule: Building Hope for Man." Some of his comments on this type of language experience are, " ...a preponderance of time is spent in either the mechanical manipulation of language forms or in discussing the manipulation of these forms....in all these classrooms language is treated as if it were a very large collection of colored blocks that teacher and student move about in various arrangements."[3]

This type of learning merely results in the acquisition of mechanical skills and knowledge (Kalivoda, p. 297), and in my opinion, the primary goal of foreign language study should be to learn to use it in some useful way. Bonin and Birckbichler have observed that " ...a student's motivation to speak is much greater if what he says is 'for real' (p. 22), that is, if classroom activities take into account his individual opinions, feelings and experiences. Such activities also give students a sense of success or reward because they can perceive progress in communication, and it has been my experience that this kind of reward is much more meaningful than test grades. In at least 95% of all student self-evaluations given in my classes at the end of each quarter, my students cite the ability to use the language in a meaningful way as

the most significant evidence of progress. This is especially important because " ...students cannot bear studying something (...) if it does not produce almost immediate reward vis-à-vis personal objectives of learning to use (communicate in) the foreign language" (Kalivoda, p. 294).

What is required then is a teaching methodology which provides real communication within the classroom itself, and for most of us, this involves only minor changes. It must be pointed out, however, that if students are to learn to communicate, then they must practice this as soon as possible. Also, " ...students are unlikely to accept, at least for very long, the idea that they will be able to communicate in the foreign language eventually" (Kalivoda, p. 294).

Meaningful talk or communication experiences need not be considered as untimely or disorderly learning (Kalivoda, p. 295). They should be structured, provide progression, and permit the student to express ideas within the range of his linguistic competence. Kalivoda (pp. 297-98) emphasizes that drills and the like are necessary to develop real communication. What is important is that they should stimulate and lead into real communication.

At this point I would like to describe some specific activities and teaching strategies that I have used and consider successful for motivating students and developing real communication.

Rapid-fire question technique[4]

A technique which I have used for many years, for I believe that it contains all the ingredients for stimulating students and developing real communication, is the rapid-fire question technique. This teaching strategy was developed by Professor Chris Nacci, formerly of Capital University, and was designed to enrich the audio-lingual activities in the classroom. Essentially this technique involves building up to a speed of 150-200 questions asked and answered orally in complete sentences in Spanish in 50 minutes. This goal is generally achieved in my classes about mid-way or toward the end of the second quarter. This procedure can be initiated as early as the first week of a beginning class, and in effect, I do begin the first week of class. This activity may constitute the entire class period or, as is generally the case in my classes, be used in conjunction with other activities like dictation, oral and written drills, songs, games, and the like.

As for the kinds of questions one can use, language learning is content free; the only constraint is the students' linguistic repertoire or the interests of students and teachers. A good dictionary such as Larousse will provide good material. In preparing the questions, one must be careful to provide adequate progression and to make crystal clear the linguistic unit or vocabulary being treated. Thus, sometimes it is necessary to include

synonyms, antonyms, definitions, etc. to develop new vocabulary.

To ensure that students cover the material required in our basic courses, I generally prepare three types of units based on content of the reading section in the text, particular grammar, and vocabulary. These are supplemented with others based on geography, history, culture of Spanish-speaking areas or the like depending upon student interest. Each unit is divided into several sub-divisions of questions; the number of sub-divisions depends upon the personality and skills of the class. I generally use four. Each sub-division of a unit may be introduced by questions in Part A. The questions in this section are prefaced by ¿sabe usted que? and presents the content to be imparted. For example, ¿Sabe usted que la corrida de toros es uno de los espectáculos más populares de México? ¿Sabe usted que los deportes favoritos de los mexicanos son el fútbol y el béisbol? You may also want to use ¿sabía usted que? if you are practicing past tenses or later substitute expressions like ¿cree usted que? The student prefaces his answer with sé que and reproduces the information given. Thus, the student is given all the information he needs to answer correctly, and maximum attention may be paid to pronunciation or intonation.

The questions in Part B review those of Part A and force the student to greater challenge. The subject and predicate are inverted. For example, ¿Es uno de los espectáculos más populares de México la corrida de toros? ¿Es diferente del

fútbol norteamericano el fútbol mexicano? Part C uses the same content, however, there is more challenge to the student; the key word is omitted. This section may include a variety of interrogatives like ¿qué? ¿cuándo? or ¿dónde? For example, ¿Qué deportes son populares en México? ¿Cuál es uno de los espectáculos más populares de México? Part D omits and requires key words different from those of Part C, and the word order permits more challenge. The instructor may ask questions using ¿por qué? or ask for descriptions and comparisons, ¿Por qué es diferente del fútbol norteamericano el fútbol mexicano? These questions require recall of more material and permit more flexible response. Variations can be introduced into the units according to the character of each class.

In Part E, the questions remain pertinent to the previously-treated content but they apply specifically and personally to individual students. From time to time the nature of the material will lend itself to an injection of personal evaluation and humor. Some examples of this type of question are: ¿Le gusta a usted la corrida de toros? ¿Qué deportes le gustan a usted? ¿Qué piensa usted del Título IX? A follow-through activity and an example of real communication may be to ask students to dramatize the following situation: two students are told, in the target language, that one is a student from Mexico, the other from the United States. They meet on the campus of the University of Mexico and discuss the popular sports of their respective countries.

With sections A-D, the speed element is important. If the student hesitates or his beginning words indicate lack of success, someone else is immediately called upon. The speed element is important to insure that students don't forget material. It also eliminates that painful silence to which students are subjected if the teacher waits indefinitely for an answer. Also, students benefit more from hearing others' responses than fidgeting painfully in silence. A brief explanation of the rapid-fire question technique together with its purpose and objectives will enable students to readily adjust. Some of the particular values of this technique are:

1. It stimulates students. The speed factor creates the necessary tension to keep students alert and active and keep them from getting bored. You may question the repetition of material in Part A or what seems to be a somewhat mechanical procedure. However, my students have told me that they find this procedure challenging. Some have mentioned having to "sit on the edge of their chairs" to be ready for questions, and competition has resulted among some students.

2. Students can easily perceive their progress in the form of personal satisfaction or peer admiration. In my classes, correct utterance of a long or somewhat complicated response has resulted in applause by the rest of the class.

3. Students gain a real sense of satisfaction with the real communication included in Part E.

4. The teacher has the satisfaction of knowing that content has been imparted, and expression has been practiced and learned in varying degrees.

There are two kinds of testing involved in this procedure, recorded and unrecorded or subjective evaluation. Because all students are active everyday, the teacher can easily subjectively assess the skills and progress of each

student. This kind of testing eliminates self-consciousness and speeds up progress. To arrive at a written score for the oral achievement, the teacher may put the pre-determined name of a student following each question and put a mark after his name if the student responds correctly. Or, the instructor may require written answers for one part.

After the teacher has used this technique to the point where he or she feels that students have achieved facility in using the language, the teacher may continue this activity making it more progressive and challenging yet successful by gradation or literally sit down. The next step in my classes is independent reading. Students are now ready for normal conversation. They read newspapers, short stories, plays, and novels outside of class. In class, they sit in groups of three to five students, narrate what they have read, and discuss it. Good students sometimes sit in groups of two, and each is capable of speaking for fifty minutes.

The role of the teacher at this point is to listen, evaluate, and make corrections. He or she also helps students choose material commensurate with their ability and interests. The values of this procedure as noted by my students are: the interaction with fellow students, a maximum of speaking and listening time, and the opportunity to clearly perceive progress as both length and facility of communication improve.

At this point I would like to describe some other activities for motivation and real communication which I include as part of my classroom procedure.

Conversation cards (Bonin and Birckbichler, pp. 22-23)

The procedure for this activity is to prepare a series of cards containing questions that students are to use to gain information from each other. These cards are generally related to the text and used in connection with a particular grammar point. For example, I have used them to drill constructions using hace...que and desde...hace. Some questions to include on each card might be, ¿Desde cuándo aprende usted el español? or ¿Cuánto tiempo hace que usted me conoce? Or, the cards may contain different questions, and students can exchange them as they finish.

The students are divided into groups of three: one asks; one answers, and one gives help. Then the roles are changed until each student has performed each function. The role of the teacher is to listen, evaluate, and make corrections.

The value of this activity is that it makes each student an active participant and maximizes the amount of time each student spends speaking and listening. Also, it provides an opportunity for interaction and mutual help. At times, the latter can be more effective than help from a teacher.

Reproducing television shows

Three basic quiz shows which students may enact with

facility are: "Twenty Questions," "What's My Line?" and "Mystery Guest." These may be used within the first quarter of language study. They require only a basic vocabulary and may be used to review the present tense or particular verbs like ser and estar since most questions are prefaced by, do you live? are you? do you work? and other basic constructions.

The teacher chooses a panel of approximately six students and one or two guests. The teacher then hands each guest a slip of paper on which is written the profession, the answer, or the name of the mystery guest, depending upon which television show is being presented. The paper is shown to the class-audience but not to the panel. The teacher then instructs the panel to ask only a determined number of questions that may be answered by yes or no. The role of the teacher is to offer assistance when needed with phrasing questions or determining answers.

The advantages of this activity are that it serves as a pleasant review of basic verbs and nouns, and it gives beginning students a sense of using the language in a relevant and interesting manner. Advanced students may present talk shows. This activity involves seeking information as well as role playing. The teacher gives students turns playing both the role of host or guest to be interviewed.

Writing and presenting television shows

Second or third level students may produce their own

television shows. Produce in this sense means to write and dramatize a script. At the lower level, this activity is generally related to the text and topics may be chosen which will reinforce vocabulary as well as provide an opportunity for real communication.

Students are divided into groups of three or four and given a topic plus some appropriate vocabulary. They are instructed, in the target language, to use the vocabulary to prepare and present a mini-television program of approximately two to three minutes in length. This activity may be linguistically controlled by choosing topics and vocabulary from lessons already covered in the text, or the teacher can permit advanced students greater use of their imagination in choosing topics. Some topics that I have used are: a melodrama, an educational program, the weather report, the sports' report, the news, and a cooking show. The role of the teacher is simply to move from group to group during the preparation of scripts, to listen and correct.

The value of this activity is that it permits each student to become involved, and topics such as those suggested provide opportunities for using one's imagination, expressing opinions, and displaying one's achievements. My experience has been that students particularily enjoy entertaining because it gives them a sense of being able to use the language in a real way. They also gain a sense of pride from displaying communicative competence to students

as well as teacher, and the achievements of one student may serve as motivation to others.

Famous person

This activity involves role playing and is appropriate for any level. It may be based on the text or simply provide an opportunity for conversation in advanced classes. The first time that the activity is presented, the teacher sets the scene and lends an air of mystery to the classroom by announcing in the target language, "Today we are very pleased to have a distinguished guest with us. This person has consented to visit the class and answer any questions that you might have." At this point, the teacher stands beside and points to a pre-determined student introducing him or her as the guest. To achieve success in this activity the first few times it is used, the teacher should choose a student who likes to entertain, is not shy, and who has an adequate command of the language. After students become accustomed to the activity, all can be given a turn.

After the guest has been introduced, the instructor should initiate the questions and then ask for questions from the class. Choice of the guest may be determined by the objectives of the teacher. For example, if he or she wishes to review content or cultural material, he may choose a literary or historical figure. We have had such famous guests as Cervantes and Christopher Columbus. If the objective is to permit students to voice opinions or

the like, political figures or controversial personalities may be chosen.

Describing or explaining pictures

This activity is based on the use of visual aids. The teacher may show several pictures to the class and ask students to describe them. For example, what do you see in this picture? or, what is in this picture? Description of pictures can be used successfully at the most elementary level and is generally coordinated with the text. For example, if particular vocabulary or grammar constructions like agreement of adjectives or comparisons are to be emphasized, the teacher may select pictures that will probably elicit responses using these particular elements. That is, a beginning language student who sees a picture depicting a pastoral scene with tall mountains will probably say, Las montañas son altas 'The mountains are high.' However, this activity may also lead into real communication, for the instructor may then follow with personal questions like, do you live in the city or the country? Do you prefer the city or the country? Why?

A more advanced version of this activity is explaining pictures. This is used principally for eliciting communication or drilling grammar. You may post several pictures in the classroom and number them. Ask students to consider them for a moment and then choose one to describe, explain, or use as the basis for an invented story. You will have no difficulty getting students to communicate, and one value of this activity is that it allows for differences in

skill. Students less sure of themselves can fall back on describing. More advanced ones can be immaginative or creative.

Picture explanation can also be used as a drill. For example, I have used an activity which I call, "Why is she sad"? to drill the use of the infinitive instead of the subjunctive. The students are shown a picture of a sad girl and instructed to give an explanation by constructing a sentence with information supplied by the teacher (the object pronoun and several verbs) and supplemented by their own choice of subject and verb object:

? (no) le mandó/mandaron/hizo/hicieron/permitió ?

In this manner, the linguistic element being taught is made clear, yet by associating sentences and picture, the student gains a sense of using the language in a meaningful way.

Circular narrative

Circular narrative is used primarily to reinforce usage of particular tenses. I use it with past tenses, that is, to practice use of the imperfect and preterit tenses. However, this activity may be used with other tenses as well. The teacher begins a narrative, and the students are instructed that they are to add one complete sentence to the narrative. The only constraint is that each pay particular attention to choosing the correct tense, imperfect or preterit. The narration is then

developed until each member of the class has contributed a sentence. This activity sometimes reaches very humorous proportions.

Each of the activities that I have just described involves using the language in some useful and stimulating way, and each is designed to develop communication in an orderly manner. The important characteristic, perhaps, of these activities is not their novelty or entertainment value as such, nor is it the particular intellectual content. Rather, what counts is that the student has the sense of using the language in a meaningful way.

Problem solving

Problem solving is text related. The objective is to have the student complete a sentence with an unpredicted yet linguistically-controlled response. For example, if the teacher wishes to practice contrary-to-fact clauses, he or she may have the student complete the following sentences: If I were rich..., If I were president..., If there were no class tomorrow..., or, If I were alone on an island.... The student must complete the sentence with a particular construction, yet he or she still has the option to express opinions or needs, that is, to say something that is "for real."

At this point, let me stress that in these kinds of activities or in the classroom in general, " ...that true communication takes place only when it is encouraged through

an atmosphere of friendliness, openness, respect for one another's differences and needs, and a good measure of lightheartedness and joviality" (Kalivoda, p. 297). This is something we perhaps have to work on all of our lives. However, I realized just how important the teacher's attitude and approach are when one of my students came to me at the end of last quarter to comment on the class. He said that he had learned a lot but had particularily enjoyed the class experience because I did not antagonize anyone.

It is also important to remember that to develop real communication, the student should be given opportunities to speak about how he views the world, to express needs, desires, and the like. However, he must also be free to be as impersonal as he wishes (Jarvis, p. 224).

Competition

The last group of activities that I wish to discuss involves competition between students. As I mentioned previously, drills are necessary to develop communication, yet they may be presented in a stimulating manner. Competition is one way to achieve this. The American student has been raised in an atmosphere of competition, and anyone who has ever competed in sports knows the excitement of being part of a team and the feeling of satisfaction when he does well and receives some sort of reward. I have tried to capitalize on these principles in order to drill what are sometimes the necessary but tedious aspects of a language, for example, verb forms. Competition facilitates

learning these: there is motivation and an immediate sense of purpose and success different from that which results from meaningful communication. Here the reward is in the form of praise from team mates or congratulations for winning a point.

The three kinds of competition that I use are the vocabulary bee, competition by two's and relay races. The vocabulary bee is a good way to reinforce vocabulary. The teacher may divide the class into teams or have individual competition. A student may win a point by successfully doing one of the following: give the Spanish equivalent of an English word; give a Spanish word that fits a particular definition; give the English equivalent of a Spanish word.

Competition by two's is used primarily to drill verb forms or comprehension of numbers and times(1:00, 2:30, etc.). One student from each team goes to the board. If verbs are being drilled, the teacher may say a subject, infinitive, and the tense required (yo-tener-preterit). The student who writes the correct answer first wins a point for his team. Or, students may be asked to write the numerical figures for the hour or number dictated. Students are very enthusiastic about these activities, and even some of the laziest will put forth extra effort to prepare if it is announced that there will be competition tomorrow.

The relay race may be used after a new tense has been introduced. The teacher first divides the class into two or

three teams. He or she then writes a subject pronoun or proper name, one for each student on a team, across the entire width of the blackboard. There should be plenty of writing space for students standing side by side. The teacher then instructs the students that, when the signal is given to begin, each must write a complete sentence using the subject before him and only the tense being drilled. When the sentence is completed, the student moves to the subject on his right, provided that the student to his right is finished, and writes a sentence using the new subject. Students may not duplicate sentences already written. When a student has written a sentence with each subject, he then returns to the first subject. This procedure is continued until the teacher gives the signal to stop. All signals are given in the target language. The teacher then corrects the sentences taking advantage of the opportunity to point out particular grammatical errors, and totals the number of correct sentences for each team. The team with the highest number wins.

As you were sitting here tonight, you may have said to yourself as I have done so many times, "I already knew all she covered and what she emphasized". " ...most sincere teachers faced with the same problem will work out similar solutions, varying only in detail or the variety of modifications made possible by the recurrence of the problem and the persistent search for more adequate solutions.

Corroboration, among us teachers, of what each has already sensed or experienced is just as important as offering something which we may consider to be new. Corroboration can be an effective means of clearing up some points with respect to our objectives and techniques." [5]

NOTES

1. Therese M. Bonin and Diane W. Birckbichler, "Real Communication Through Interview and Conversation Cards," The Modern Language Journal, 59 (January-February 1975), 22.
2. Theodore B. Kalivoda, "Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom," Hispania, 59 (May 1976), 294.
3. Gilbert A. Jarvis, "Molecule by Molecule: Building Hope for Man," The Modern Language Journal, 59 (September-October 1975), 221.
4. This technique as it is described here was adapted for use in my classes from the technique developed by Professor Chris N. Nacci. This adaptation is the result of my observation of Professor Nacci's classes at Capital University and description of the method in his article, "Enriching the Audio-lingual Activity in the Classroom," Hispania, 48 (March 1965).
5. Chris N. Nacci, "Spoken and Written Composition: Objectives and Techniques, Bases and Evaluations," Hispania, 56 (March 1973), 106.